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THE FITNESS

Of Repealing the

SEPTENNIAL ACT

At this Juncture Consider'd:

IN A

LETTER

FROM

An Elector to a Member of Parliament.

WITH

Some Reflections on the *Present State* of the NATION.

To which are added,

Two Remarkable Speeches on that Subject, delivered in the House of C——ns; And a List of those who voted for and against the Repeal in the Year 1734.

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THE

FITNESS

Of REPEALING the

SEPTENNIAL BILL.

SIR,

THO' I am not fond of *appearing in Print* upon any Occaſion, yet I could not reſiſt the *Importunity* of my *Friends* in this County which you repreſent, that I would throw out to the Public my Sentiments upon a Point that we apprehend has in its *Conſequences affected our own Liberties*, and may, in the *End*, *deſtroy thoſe of our Poſterity*.

What I am now to lay before you, Sir, is the Senſe of your *beſt Friends* in this County; and that it is not digeſted into the *Form of an Inſtruction*, is owing to the Opinion

 they

they have of your Integrity; and that you will be determined by *Truth*, whether offer'd by Way of *Inſtruction* or *Advice*. Had the *Subject* I now touch upon, been of ſuch a Nature, as that it could only affect the *Laws of Society*, without violating the *Rights of Nature*, you might not have been troubled with this *Addreſs*: But I conceive, Sir, that *every People*, nay every *Individual of a People*, has a Right of remonſtrating to the Guardians of their Properties and Liberties, againſt Meaſures that evidently tend to weaken the one, and to ſubvert the other. Give me leave farther to ſay, that, as the *Rights of Nature* never can be extinguiſhed in the *Laws of Society*, if the former are violated by the latter, the People have a Right to recur to other Remedies beſides Inſtructions. I have thought it neceſſary, to premiſe this much in general, Sir, becauſe I know a Doctrine has of late been broached, as if a Parliament, were they at one Vote to tear up by the Roots every Foundation on which the *Liberties and Properties of the Nation* are built, had a Right to expect from the People an *abſolute*, nay an *unrepining Compliance*.

Tho' I am ſenſible, Sir, with how much *Tenderneſs for the natural Rights* of the People, the preſent Parliament has exerted the great Truſt devolved on them; yet their *Purity* and *Diſintereſtedneſs* is no Security to the People

People that all *future Parliaments* will be equally virtuous. Beſides, I dare ſay the preſent Parliament will willingly give up any Power or Advantages which the former Exigencies of the Times made expedient to intruſt them or their immediate Predeceſſors with, as ſoon as the Reaſons for that Truſt ceaſe. This is what a good Parliament will be fond of doing, eſpecially as they cannot anſwer for the Virtue of their Succeſſors.

The *Alterations*, Sir, which extraordinary Reaſons of State have rendered either *expedient* or *neceſſary* in the *Conſtitution*, have, I am afraid, rather *diminiſhed* its *Majeſty*, than *added to its Security:* They may have *given Power to the Government*, but I am convinced they have given *no Strength to the Nation.* Upon this Conviction it is, that I take the Liberty to lay before you my Sentiments with regard to one, give me leave to call it, *Innovation* in our *Conſtitution*, which a temporary *Exigency of Government* perhaps once render'd tolerable to the Subject, but the ingrafting it upon the Conſtitution may render dangerous to his Liberty. You will eaſily gueſs that I mean the *Caſe of Septennial Parliaments.*

Here, Sir, I muſt lay it down as a Maxim, that is confirmed by the Experience of all ges and Countries, that a frequent Reverſion to firſt Principles, is neceſſary to the right Preſervation of any Conſtitution; for this plain

Reaſon, becauſe it is from the Fountain alone that the Streams which create the *Vigour* and *Bloom* of *Liberty* can be ſupplied. Every other Suſtenance it receives, however it may impoſe upon Mankind for a Time, is *forced* and *unnatural*. Now, Sir, if there is in the whole Syſtem of the *Britiſh* Conſtitution, a firſt Principle that gave *Life*, *Dignity* and Strength to all its other Parts, it was a frequent Rotation of the Legiſlative Power, or to ſpeak more properly, a *frequent Return of that Power into the Hands of thoſe from whom it was derived*. At the Conqueſt, the Conſtitution of *England* received no Alteration in this Reſpect, any farther than that the Repreſentative Body began then to be called by the *Norman* Word *Parlament*, inſtead of the *Saxon* WITTENAGEMOTE, or what, according to Sir *Henry Spelman*, is almoſt the very ſame, FOLKMOTE: And it is plain from the univerſal Conſent of Hiſtorians and Lawyers, from the Conqueſt to the Time of *Henry* VIII. that new Parliaments were held every Year. At firſt indeed they were held twice a Year; but the Diſtractions occaſioned by the Civil Wars prevented their meeting ſo often. The firſt Inſtance which we have that a Parliament may be held but once a Year, is in the Reign of *Edward* the Second,

* Rot. P. 9. Ed. II.

where

where we find, *Que Parliament ſerra tenu un ou deux foits per An.* i. e. *That a Parliament ſhall be held once or twice every Year.*

In the 36th of *Edward* the Third, we find, *That for Maintenance of* the ſaid *Articles and Statutes, and Redreſs of divers Miſchiefs that daily happen, a Parliament ſhall be holden every Year.*

In the Reign of *Richard* the Second, we find one of the Demands of the Subjects to be, "That a Parliament may be yearly holden in "a convenient Place, to redreſs Delays in "Suits, and to end ſuch Caſes as the Judges "doubt of.

To multiply Quotations of this Nature, would be both unneceſſary and tedious. I ſhall only obſerve that the firſt Inſtance which we have of the Parliament's being prorogued, was under one of the moſt arbitrary violent Princes that ever this or any other Nation beheld, I mean *Henry* the Eighth: This Stretch of Power was perhaps the ſtrongeſt Evidence of the Effects which the Alteration of Property under his Father, *Henry* the Seventh, was attended with. But the Scale of Property, which before that Time had always and unalterably remained with the Barons, beginning now to incline to the Commons (who were by that Time ſenſible of the great Advantages which the making the Properties of the Barons *alienable*, gave them,) prevented their giving any Diſguſt to that capricious Prince, the Weight

of

of whoſe Power and Authority might ſoon have reduced the Ballance to its former Poize. On this Account the Crown was ſure of meeting with no Check from the Commons in all the arbitrary Meaſures then purſued, therefore its Intereſts led it to continue their Power beyond the limited Time.

On the other hand, the Barons were too fond of what they at firſt vainly imagined was a Relief, and a Kind of an *Emancipation* from Law; they were too much immerſed in the Luxury which the vaſt Sums they raiſed by alienating their Lands ſupplied, to retain the ſame Jealouſy of the Power of the Crown, and the ſame Vigilance over their own Independancy and the Liberties of the People, perhaps they were too weak, to diſpute this Innovation. However that may be, it is certain, that this Power which the King then aſſumed, was till that Time unknown to the Conſtitution; and had not the Circumſtances of his immediate Succeſſors rendered it both unſafe and unpracticable for them to make ſo bad a Uſe of that Innovation as it would have admitted of, the Crown might by this Time have claimed the Nomination of Members of Parliament, as a Right inherent to itſelf.

But a *weak unactive* Minority, *Differences* about *Religion*, a *diſputed Title* to the *Crown*, and the *Ignorance* of a *Foreign* or an *upſtart* Miniſtry, ſaved the Nation from being ſaddled with a perpetual Parliament in the four ſuc-

ceeding Reigns. Every one of the Princes that reigned during that Period, had a new Scheme of Religion or Government to execute, a new Syſtem of Power to erect, that abſolutely required a *Rotation* of the *Legiſlative* Power. The Views of one Party during the Reign of *Edward* the Sixth could not be accompliſhed while the Parliament, that had ſerved the other, ſate. The favourite Project which Queen *Mary* had of eſtabliſhing Popery, could never be brought about by Means of a Houſe of Commons whereof the Majority was Proteſtant: The ſame medley Parliament that recognized the Title of Queen *Elizabeth* at the Beginning of her Reign, was not to be truſted towards the Middle of it; and King *James* was uneaſy with all Parliaments. It was not therefore in all that Period the Intereſt of the Crown to perpetuate a Sitting Parliament. Queen *Elizabeth* indeed, had ſhe been willing, might have got a Parliament to her own Liking; and in caſe ſhe had entertained any arbitrary Views, might have prorogued it to a Perpetuity; but the Maxims by which ſhe governed, rendered it impoſſible, that either a diſloyal or a ſervile Parliament could be returned. As ſhe never governed by a Faction, the Intereſts of the *Government* and the *Subject* were the ſame in the *Election*; and the *Authority* of the *Sovereign* was united with the *Power* of the *Parliament* in the *Repreſentation*.

Charles

Charles the First, by a *fatal Train of Politicks*, began with thinking Parliaments *troubleſome*; then *unneceſſary*; then *dangerous*; and laſt of all *rebellious*. This led him to ſtretch his Prerogative to the utmoſt, till he found it like a broken Reed in his Hand, unable either to skreen his Miniſters, or defend himſelf: For the Parliament knew its own Strength; it knew what a Pageant of State a King is, unleſs he has ſome Intereſt either in the Purſe or Affections of the Public. They knew that *Charles* never could *command* the one without their Aſſiſtance; and that the very Methods he fell upon to *command* it, loſt him the other.

It was in vain therefore that he diſcontinued his Parliaments for twelve Years together; for the Nation at laſt found the Means of wreſting from him an Aſſent to *an Act*, that tho' it was not perfectly conſiſtent with the Conſtitution, yet brought it a little nearer to its firſt Principles, I mean the *Act for a triennial Parliament*.

And here, Sir, give me Leave to ſuggeſt to your own Reaſon, one or two Conſiderations that may have ſome Weight with regard to the Part you may act on this important Head.

Had the Reign of King *Charles* the Firſt been diſtinguiſhed by a Series of misfortunate Conduct of one Miniſter, skreened by a Parliament whom he found Means to corrupt; had this Miniſter obtained the Diſpoſal of a

Revenue

Revenue greater than ever any King of *England* before poſſeſſed: Had he been backed by an Army whoſe Numbers were formidable even to the united Strength of the Nation, whoſe Officers he placed and diſplaced, and whoſe Pay was dropt or continued at his Pleaſure: I ſay, Sir, would the Nation at that Time have thought its Liberties ſafe even for three Years in the Hands of a Parliament that ſupported the Power, or skreened the Crimes of ſuch a Miniſter? Would it not have expreſſed the ſame Reſentment againſt the *Influence* of *Corruption*, that it did againſt the *Abuſe of Prerogative*? Would *Pym* or *Hampden* have thought a *triennial Parliament* a ſufficient Barrier againſt the *Encroachments of Power* upon the *natural Rights of their Fellow Subjects*? No, Sir, they would not; had it depended on their Voice, annual Parliaments muſt have again taken Place; the Legiſlative Power muſt have revolved more frequently: And thus, if the Channels of the Conſtitution had contracted any Impurity, they muſt have been clean'd as often as this Rotation took Place.

But let us conſider, Sir, what they did as Things then ſtood: They had an Act paſſed which executed itſelf, and rendered the Meeting of Parliaments, at leaſt once in three Years, independant of the Sovereign, if he ſhould neglect to call them. This Act, ſpecious as it was at that Juncture, was but the Prelude of an Extenſion of the parliamentary

Power, to a Degree that intirely ruined the Conſtitution: For it is certain, that if the Parliament, when they found the *Independants* and the Army beginning to aſſume *Dictatorial Powers*, had had the *Virtue to have diſſolved itſelf*, or to have ſuffered the King to do it, and thus to have returned to the People the Exerciſe of their Rights; they muſt have prevented all the Miſeries that afterwards followed: But Power, like *Circe*'s Cup, has a Charm that changes *Patriots* into *Tyrants*, *Freemen* into *Slaves*, and *Heroes* into *Monſters*. Its intoxicating Qualities, Sir, ought therefore always to be diſtruſted; they ought to be withheld even from thoſe who we have Reaſon to believe are moſt Proof againſt them.

It would be extremly impertinent in me, Sir, to retale all that has been wrote with regard to the fatal Conſequences which this Craft of Proroguing, or, which is the ſame Thing, of continuing Parliaments, was attended with in the Reign of *Charles* the Second, under whom the Triennial Act was repealed. I cannot however help making ſome Remarks on the Conduct of that Prince and his Parliaments.

Being ſenſible how impoſſible it was to gain his arbitrary Ends, without the Countenance of a Parliament, the very Name and Nature of which he hated; he did not, as his Father's miſtaken Policy led him to do, attempt at firſt to rule without Parliaments, but to corrupt them.

them. But give me leave to ſay, Sir, that this was a more effectual Way to enſlave the Nation than his Father had taken. While a deſigning Prince or Miniſtry works without a Parliament, they work upon their own Bottom; but all their Shifts and Arts to raiſe Money are ſoon exhauſted, and the Exigencies of Government muſt at laſt force them to have recourſe to the Parliament. But when they *work* with a corrupted Parliament, they make the Nation, in ſome Senſe, a Party in their Guilt, and the Conſtitution acceſſary to its own Violation. *Charles* the Second was ſenſible of this; but his Revenues could not afford ſuch a plentiful Supply of Corruption as to be ſure of a Majority upon every Election: Therefore he took care to have as few Elections as poſſible, and lumped the Affair with his own Penſioners in the mean Time; But their Behaviour is a Proof that the Degrees of Corruption are in proportion to its Means. The Sums that *Charles* laviſhed, were but paultry, when compared with thoſe that others have expended to the ſame Purpoſes. His Penſioners ventured indeed a little in the Pool; but they ſhivered, and turned back from the dirty Plunge. *Charles*, therefore, was miſtaken in not having an enterprizing Miniſter, who knew the Secret of making them ſouſe over Head and Ears. Had he got ſuch a Miniſter, the Nation would have been ſoon weary of Parliaments,

and the Court would have beheld them *without Jealouſy*, nay *with Fondneſs*. It is true, that on the one Hand, he might ſtill have found Inconveniencies in frequent Elections; and on the other, his Miniſter might have not thought it quite convenient to deprive the People of all their Rights of Election, as *Charles* did. The firſt Meaſure would have required a great deal more Money than he had to beſtow, to have anſwered his Ends; and had he followed the ſame Courſe which *Charles* took, it had been impoſſible for them to have raiſed Money enough to have kept them firm to his Intereſt in every low Job, of which all firſt Miniſters, in a free Country, muſt neceſſarily have a great Number.

We may therefore reaſonably conclude, that had *Charles* thoroughly underſtood the Method of managing Parliaments, he would neither have ruled by ſhort ones, nor have ſuſpended the People's Right of Election entirely, but have fallen upon the Project of Septennial ones; which might have effectually ruined the Nation: For, beſides the Conſiderations I have already mentioned, a Septennial Parliament is the Means of keeping every Slave of a Court to his Duty, more effectually than perpetual Parliaments: For if he knows that he cannot be turned out of his Seat, he will be a great deal more refractory; he will treat his Paymaſter more *de haut en bas*, than he will do when he knows that it depends on his

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own Zeal for the Intereſt of the Miniſter, that he ſhall ſit when the ſeven Years are expired.

After the Revolution was effected, it is well known, that Triennial Parliaments were then looked upon as the great Touchſtone of the New Eſtabliſhment, by all who acted on the Principles of Liberty, and underſtood the Intereſt of the Nation, or had ſeen the terrible Conſequences with which long Parliaments were attended. Nothing therefore in King *William*'s Reign was more agreeable than *reſtoring Triennial Parliaments*; and the great Things they did were ſufficient Proofs of their Expediency. Notwithſtanding the Hopes of the *Jacobites* were ſtrong; their Faction numerous; the King without Iſſue; and two different Parties perpetually oppoſing and undermining one another, both in the Court and Senate; yet we find that a vigorous War was entered into againſt the overgrown Power of *France*: The Proteſtant Succeſſion was eſtabliſhed in the Houſe of *Hanover*; the Money of the Nation was re-coined; our Faith with our Allies preſerved; the Honour of the Nation aſſerted; an honourable Peace concluded; the Debts of the Public laid upon ſure Funds, the * Prince eſtabliſhed firmly on the Throne, and all by a Triennial Parliament. Let us look into the ſucceeding Reign, we ſhall

* See Biſhop Burnet, Vol. P. 218.

find

find the Nation united at Home, reſpected and triumphant Abroad, the Credit of the Public high, the Union undertaken and compleated, the Machinations of Faction defeated, and the Power of *France* reduced to the laſt Ebb, by Triennial Parliaments. Can it be imagined, Sir, that the Nation, under Queen *Anne*, would have ſo chearfully contributed to the immenſe Expences of the War, if they had thought that their Taxes had been laid by a Parliament that was viſibly under the Influence of a Miniſter? Can you imagine, that if the Miniſtry, uncorrupted and zealous as it then was, had had to do with Septennial Parliaments, they would not have found the Means of gaining a Majority over to their Intereſts. Beſides, Sir, I believe it will be found by Experience, that a Parliament of the ſame Men who meet every Year for ſeven Years, would, if left to themſelves, without the leaſt miniſterial Influence, ſplit into Parties, that muſt inevitably be of vaſt Detriment to the Service of their Country. We have, I think, but one Inſtance of a Parliament before the preſent one, that was abſolutely without any undue Influence from Miniſters, and that was the Parliament which ſo vigorouſly oppoſed King *Charles* the Firſt; yet by the noble Hiſtorian's Account, and by the Accounts of thoſe who ſate in it, there never was a more miſerably divided Set of Men in the World. I am therefore convinced, that had the great

War

War with *France* been carried on under a Septennial Parliament, even though it had been quite pure from Corruption, the Nation never could have made ſuch Efforts as it did: Intereſt indeed unites Men; but if it is a deſtructive Intereſt, the Union muſt be deſtructive too, and the longer it laſts the more deſtructive.

In the ſucceeding Reign, which was that of *George* the Firſt, the Proteſtant Eſtabliſhment took Place, and a formidable Rebellion was ſuppreſſed under a triennial Parliament: For I call it *Triennial* Sir, becauſe when theſe Things happened, it had not yet made itſelf *Septennial:* But the Nation's being ſtill in a Ferment, the Enemies of the Government active and zealous, and the Prince a Stranger to the Manners of the People, it was thought convenient not to venture another Election in ſo ſhort a Period, and *for the Parliament to continue itſelf* for ſeven Years longer. Beſides, it was ſtrongly urged, that in the then uncertain and unſettled State of the Nation, no Foreign Power would chuſe to enter into any Alliance with us, if they did not ſee the ſame Parliament that had given ſo many Inſtances of its Zeal for his Majeſty's Perſon and Government continued. It was then objected by many, that it carried an Inſinuation of the worſt Sort along with it, for the Parliament in a Manner to declare, that the

Share

Share which his Majeſty had in the Affections of his Subjects was ſo little, that they were not to be truſted with the Election of their own Repreſentatives: That inſtead of making the Ferment which the Nation was then in ſubſide, it would increaſe it, ſhould the Miniſtry puſh a Thing that was ſo extremely unpopular and unconſtitutional. It was farther ſaid, that thoſe Allies ought neither to be courted nor to be truſted, who would not enter into Treaties with us, unleſs we gave up our Conſtitution: Nay ſome, who were averſe to this Meaſure, went ſo far as to ſay, *That King, Lords, and Commons could no more continue a Parliament beyond its natural Duration, than they can make one.*

I ſhall not pretend to enter into all the Facts and Reaſonings that each Party offered in Support of its own Opinion; I ſhall only take the Liberty to ſay, that all the Arguments which prevailed with the Legiſlature for repealing the Triennial Act, and paſſing the Septennial one, were merely temporary and determined with the Exigency of that particular Juncture: Therefore Sir, I muſt take the Liberty to examine whether the ſame Reaſons that might have ſwayed with the Parliament in the Year 1716, or if Reaſons equally ſtrong for a Septennial Parliament ſtill exiſt. This cannot but be looked upon by all impartial Perſons as a fair Way of arguing, eſpeci-

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ally as it is allowed on all hands, that frequent Parliaments were the undoubted Privileges of the People in their Original Conſtitution, and that the Continuance of Parliaments beyond their natural Duration, came in under a tyrannical Reign, and was adopted by weak or deſigning Princes.

But before I enter into this Part of what I propoſe, I muſt beg leave to take Notice of an Argument which I knew, at the Time of enacting the Septennial Bill, was urged againſt Triennial Parliaments; and this was, *That three Years was too ſhort a Time for a Parliament to effect any great Thing that is for the Intereſt of the Nation.* Sir, if we examine this Propoſition by a Compariſon of Facts, I believe it will be found that, at leaſt, as great Things have been done by *Triennial*, nay by *Annual* Parliaments, as have been done ſince they were diſuſed. We have already mentioned ſome of the great Things done by *Triennial* Parliaments in the Reigns of King *William* and Queen *Anne*. Let us ſee what great Things for the Intereſt of the Nation have been done ſince their Days. Can our *pacific Negotiations with* Spain, ſtand in Competition with *our glorious War with* France? Will *the frequent Votes* of *Credit*, that have been ſince granted, eclipſe the *Merit of recoining our Silver?* Can the *Convention* be compared to the Peace of *Ryſwick*, the Treaty of *Hanover* to the Conferences of

Gertruydenberg, or the *Riot Act* to the *Eſtabliſhment of the Proteſtant Succeſſion*? Give me leave to ſay, Sir, that Poſterity will look upon this Compariſon with a very different Eye from what we do; and that ſome ſtronger Proofs for the Objection muſt be brought before the World can ſwallow it.

If we conſult Reaſon on this Head, there never was any Thing more ridiculous; for if a Parliament does any Thing, *they muſt do it in one Seſſion*; if it is put off to another, all their Proceedings muſt re-commence, if they are by Way of Bill. As for the Approbation which the Parliament gives to the Proceedings of a Miniſter, which they do not give by Way of *Act*, and which perhaps another Parliament might refuſe, it might deſerve a little Conſideration, whether ſome late Sanctions, which certain Tranſactions have received, or ſeemed to receive, has entirely tended to the Intereſt and Satisfaction of the Nation.

I now proceed, Sir, to what I propoſed; I mean, to conſider whether or not the ſame general Reaſons for continuing Triennial Parliaments ſtill exiſt, as they did when the Septennial Act took place.

In the firſt Place, his late Majeſty was a perſonal Stranger to the Inclinations, Manners, and Principles of a great Number of his Subjects when he came over: A ſtrong Prejudice lay with one Party againſt a *Proteſtant* Prince,

Prince, with another againſt a *foreign* one, and with ſome againſt all Princes: Another Intereſt, incompatible with his, had been encouraged, and received Countenance at Court during the laſt Years of his immediate Predeceſſor's Reign; and had acquired Strength enough to break out into *open Rebellion*. The *French* were at the Time of that Rebellion, watching to improve every Opportunity which our Diviſions afforded: The Diſtractions in the *North* prevented our expecting any Aſſiſtance from that Quarter: The Emperor, our then firm and natural Ally, was recovering from a long expenſive War, and was engaged afreſh in another with the *Turk*; ſo that all our foreign Dependance was on the *Dutch*. Theſe Conſiderations gave ſome Colour to inſiſt upon Unanimity at Home; and Unanimity at Home, it was pretended, never could be obtained but by continuing the Parliament. Theſe were the Arguments inſiſted upon at that Time for continuing the Parliament; but I conceive, Sir, that every one of theſe Reaſons have either been found falſe in Fact, or that they no longer exiſt.

His late Majeſty did not owe the quiet Poſſeſſion of his Crown, during the remaining Part of his Reign, to the Continuance of the Parliament; he did not owe it to any Acceſſion of foreign Alliance, which that Parliament

ment encouraged; he owed it, next to his own wiſe Government, to the *Alliance of* France, under the Regent, whoſe Intereſt led him to cultivate a ſtrict Friendſhip with *Britain*; but no Man of Common Senſe will pretend that this Alliance was in the ſmalleſt Degree owing to Septennial Parliaments. The Rebellion was ſuppreſt before the Parliament was declared Septennial, and the Act which declared it, was ſo far from producing *Unanimity at Home*, that every Body who lived then may remember, it produced nothing *but Diviſions and Animoſities.*

His preſent Majeſty ſucceeded to the Throne with all the Advantages which the Affection that the Nation retained for the Memory of his Father, joined to his own Royal Virtues, could give. The *Diſaffection* that troubled the firſt Part of his late Majeſty's Reign, is now vaniſhed. There is ſcarce ſuch a Perſon now in the Kingdom, as a *genuine old Jacobite*; nay I will venture to ſay, that they who were moſt diſtinguiſhed for their Adherence to that Party, and even acted with Vigour and Zeal to bring in the Pretender, are now the ſureſt and moſt thorough-paced Friends that the Government has in that Part of the Iſland: Nay it is notorious, that the Families of that Party, which were at the Time of the late Rebellion in *Scotland* diſtinguiſhed for their *Jacobitiſm*, are now increaſed one third in *Riches*, in *Influence*, and *Power*; and

and there is not above four of thoſe Eſtates that were forfeited, which are not now in a better Condition than they were at the Time of the Forfeiture, and in the ſame Hands, or their Deſcendants. If we look through *England*, the very Name of *Jacobitiſm* ſeems to be *forgot*; and if it is ever mentioned, it is with *Ridicule* and *Contempt*.

But all the Writers in favour of the Miniſtry and Septennial Parliaments, have ſtill induſtriouſly endeavoured to confound the two Terms of Diſaffection and Diſſatisfaction together; though nothing in Nature can be more different. *Diſſaffection* ariſes from *Principle* or *Prejudice*; it prevails alike under all Governments that has not the ridiculous Stamp of the Faction to recommend it; it equally abhors a *good* as a *bad* Adminiſtration, if not eſtabliſhed on its own abſurd Principles; nay, nothing gives thoſe few who may happen ſtill to be tainted with it, ſo much Uneaſineſs and Diſquiet, as a firm, vigorous, and ſucceſsful Government; nothing affords them ſo much Pleaſure, as *public Misfortune* or *national Calumity*.

Diſſatisfaction, on the other hand, is founded on the Abuſe of Power, as the other is on the Exerciſe of it, by thoſe to whom it is intruſted: It proceeds often from Zeal, and often from a Jealouſy leſt the Honour of the Nation may ſuffer in weak or wicked Hands. The Diſſatisfaction that has prevailed of late, has

has not proceeded from Perſons, but Meaſures, and has always been juſtified by the Event: They who are at preſent diſſatisfied, have given the moſt eminent Proofs of their Attachment to the Principles upon which his Majeſty's Title to the Throne is founded. It was with Grief they ſaw the Contempt the Nation has fallen into abroad; and they ſaw with Concern the ſame Meaſures purſued, and the ſame Perſons employed that had occaſioned it. If on that Account they gave ſome Proofs of their Diſſatisfaction, that has put the Nation on its Guard, they acted as dutiful Subjects, more zealous for the *Honour of the Crown* than *the Intereſt of the Miniſter*. But as ſoon as the Meaſures were altered, they joined in giving their Voices to more honourable Meaſures; they even out-did the Miniſtry itſelf in their Zeal to ſupport his Majeſty; and it is to be hoped their Zeal will meet with ſuitable Succeſs.

Upon the whole, therefore, Sir, I think it is undeniable, that none of that Diſaffection, which ſerved at leaſt for a Pretext to repeal the Triennial Act, now remains; and that not one of the Reaſons that were then given for enacting the Septennial Bill, can be pleaded for its Continuance; but many Reaſons may be given why it ought at this Juncture to be repealed.

One of theſe Reaſons, Sir, is, that we have as yet ſeen no good Effects which has attended the

the Parliament's ſitting ſeven Years; on the contrary, it may be hereafter in the Power of a Miniſter, who has *Poſts*, *Places*, and *Penſions* at his Diſpoſal, to ſecure a Majority of a Septennial Parliament, ſo as to approve of all his deſtructive Meaſures: Whereas, if the ſame Parliament were Triennial, the People would have the Means of ſetting aſide thoſe Members with whom they have Reaſon to be diſſatisfied ſeven Times in one and twenty Years, inſtead of three Times. The Proportion therefore of the Chance, which the People has for the Preſervation of their Liberties under Triennial Parliaments, and under *Septennial*, is as *twenty-one to ſeven.*

Another Reaſon, Sir, why we conceive you ought to vote for the Repeal of that Act, if it ſhould come before you, is the Succeſs which a late Meaſure propoſed to ſecure the Independency of Parliaments met with. Had that Bill, Sir, taken Effect, the Neceſſity of reſtoring Triennial Parliaments would not have been near ſo great as it is; but as it ſeems to be determined that Placemen and Penſioners may compoſe the Majority of one Houſe, it is but natural to wiſh that the Temptation of their enjoying their Seats and Emoluments at the ſame Time, for ſo long a Term as ſeven Years, were removed: And to conclude, that if it is not removed, the Diſſatisfaction that now prevails, will ſtill continue, and the Suſ-

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picions of the Repreſentatives of the People being under an undue Influence, muſt increaſe.

Two Circumſtances, Sir, that are but of Yeſterday, convince me of the Expediency of repealing this Act: The firſt is the Succeſs of the Exciſe Scheme. That Scheme, deſtructive as it was, muſt have certainly taken Place, had it not been for the approaching Elections: But they who were moſt zealous in ſpeaking and writing in its Favour, were ſo indiſcreet as to own that they were afraid if they ſhould carry it thro', it might influence the Elections of their Friends in the next Parliament, and therefore it was more expedient to ſet it aſide.

The other Circumſtance I mean, Sir, is what happened on the late Occaſion I have juſt mentioned: It is certain, that the Majority on that Occaſion was leſs than ever was known upon ſo important a Queſtion. But to what do the Dependants on a certain Gentleman attribute this in all public Places and Companies? To that Gentleman (to uſe their own Words) *giving Leave* to his Friends to vote againſt him: Why ſhould he give them this Leave Sir? To be ſure, leſt they diſoblige their Conſtituents, and loſe their Places in the approaching Elections.

From theſe two Circumſtances, Sir, it appears, that the more near an Election is, the more cautious is a Miniſtry; and if the Elections were twice as frequent as they are, the Miniſtry would be twice as tender of the Intereſts

tereſts of the Public, and conſequently that the Public would receive double Advantages.

The reſtoring the Conſtitution to its original Privilege of frequent Elections, muſt be attended with the beſt Conſequences with regard to the foreign Intereſts of the Nation, and the Figure which ſhe makes abroad. That this Kingdom has vaſt intrinſick Strength, the preſent Efforts againſt the common Enemies of all Parties amongſt us, is an evident Proof: And nothing can defeat the good Effects which the Terror of this Strength muſt always produce, but the Opinion that our Neighbours may entertain that the Parliament is under the Influence of a weak timorous Miniſtry. The reſtoring to the People their antient Right of frequent Elections would go far to cure them of this Miſtake; and they would ſoon find the Difference betwixt the Reſolutions of a free Parliament, and the Trifling of an intereſted Miniſter. Let us reflect, Sir, on our late Treatment from *Spain:* Can it be imagined that ſhe would have dared to treat us in the inſolent inhuman Manner ſhe has done, if ſhe had thought that the Voice of the People had retained the ſmalleſt Influence on the Affairs of the Government. It was, Sir, their Opinion that our Miniſtry durſt not go to War; their Opinion that the Parliament never would force them to act againſt their Inclinations, which produced the infamous Treatment we received. Their Pretences about the Cry of the People, and the Violence of the Oppoſition to the Government, is weak and ridiculous: If they had thought that the

People, or the Oppoſition had been of any Conſequence, they would never have preſumed to puſh Affairs to the Extremities they did.

We are now entered into a War, the Support and Management of which muſt depend in a great Meaſure upon the Affections of the People towards the Government. The reſtoring them to all their antient Privileges, is the beſt Means of ſecuring their Affections, and never can create the leaſt Uneaſineſs in the Breaſt of any well-meaning Man in the Nation. If Miniſters deſign well, and act honeſtly, frequent Elections, inſtead of hurting, will preſerve them, and the Government will be built on the ſtrongeſt of all Foundations, the Affections of the People.

But the true Teſt of the Merit of this Meaſure is to examine by the Conſtitution of *Great-Britain* in particular. The provoking Steps which King *James* had taken to deſtroy the Conſtitution of the Nation made the Revolution neceſſary; but it was amazing to ſee, that for ſeveral Years after the Revolution was effected, the Bill for Triennial Parliaments had not paſſed: This gave great Concern to all who wiſhed well to the Conſtitution, and is a farther Proof that nothing is ſo bewitching as Power; for if there was a Grievance, the Continuation of which made the Revolution neceſſary, it was the depriving the People of their Rights of frequent Elections. The Claim of Right indeed aſſerts *the Freedom of Elections*; but to what Purpoſe was it to aſſert the Freedom of a Thing that might not happen once in a Man's Life-time. It likewiſe aſſerts

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the Freedom of Debate; but unleſs the People have a Right of frequently electing their own Repreſentatives, a Prince or a Miniſter may fall upon a Way to prevent all Debate in Parliament, by gaining over a Majority that may purſue Meaſures which ſhall force all the honeſt uninfluenced Part from their Aſſembly, and leave none but thoſe whoſe Intereſts lead them to be *all of one Mind*. It likewiſe ſays that *Parliaments ought to be held frequently*; but here Miniſters have a ready Anſwer: *All that is meant by that*, ſay they, is, *That the Parliament in Being ſhall meet frequently, that is, once a Year*. Thus it appears, that the Claim of Right did not ſufficiently provide for this important Privilege of the People: And it was owing to the Inſtances of the Country Party that the Triennial Bill paſſed at all; for it had once been refuſed the Royal Aſſent in King *William*'s Reign: But the Friends of the Conſtitution went ſo far, as to declare, that according to the Principles upon which King *William* came in, and the Obligations he lay under to the People, they expected that even *annual Parliaments would be reſtored*. Thus it is plain, that the Senſe of the Patriots who brought about the Revolution, was for the frequent Elections of Members of Parliament; and that if they were not expreſly provided for by Claim of Rights, it was owing to a Preſumption, that they were ſo inſeparable from the Ends for which the Revolution was brought about, that they were always to be underſtood as a Fundamental of Government.

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This leads me, Sir, to one Conſideration that unanſwerably proves the Neceſſity of frequent Elections; which is, that if they are not fully provided for by the Conſtitution ſince the Revolution, it is miſerably defective; becauſe, in that Caſe, the People can have no Controul upon the Abuſe of *Parliamentary Truſt*. For if a Parliament is always to ſit, how can we ſuppoſe that the People can have any Redreſs of thoſe Grievances which that Parliament may create. Give me leave to ſay, Sir, that however diſtant the *Probability* may be, that there is a *Poſſibility* of a Parliament's entering into Meaſures that may overthrow the Conſtitution. Now as this is poſſible, can we imagine there is no Remedy for this in the Conſtitution? And yet there can be none but frequent Elections by the People. For the laſt Reſort of Juſtice being in a King and Parliament, the Parliament alone can check a *King*; but if a King, or rather his Miniſter, ſhall find Means to gain over the Parliament, none can check them but the People: Yet the People cannot legally do it while they continue a Parliament. Therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary, that the People ſhould have it, at leaſt, in their Power to ſet thoſe Repreſentatives aſide, whom they imagine have betrayed their Truſt; and not to wear the Yoke not only about their own Necks, but thoſe of their Poſterity.

I muſt take the Liberty farther to obſerve, Sir, that the Doctrine of an *unaccountable*, *uncontroulable* Parliament, is ſupported by the ſame Arguments with that of an *abſolute arbi-*

bitrary Prince. The Conſtitution has effectually provided againſt the one, and if the other it not ſo effectually guarded againſt, it is to be hoped that it ſoon will. For my own Part, I think that ſeven Years is a ſufficient Time for any Miniſtry, if they find it convenient or neceſſary, to create a corrupt Dependance of a Majority of Parliament upon themſelves; and that tho' they do not do it, yet the People will ſtill be uneaſy and apprehenſive, leſt while they part with their Power for ſo long a Time as ſeven Years, a bad Uſe may be made of it in the mean Time. And indeed this Jealouſy is but too well founded on Experience; for if we look into the Hiſtory of paſt Ages, we ſhall there find that the Extenſion of the Duration of Power, was always attended with the Loſs of Liberty; and that the ſhorter the Term was for which it was granted, the Liberties of the People were more ſafe. It would be endleſs to multiply Inſtances of this Kind; you need but dip into the Hiſtories of *Greece* and *Rome*, to ſee it verified almoſt in every Page. I am ſenſible that Inconveniencies did ariſe from the ſhort Time in which their Magiſtrates enjoy'd their Powers; but the People wiſely overlooked thoſe Inconveniencies, becauſe of the greater ones which might have attended ſuch an Innovation in the Conſtitution, as the prolonging thoſe Powers muſt have been attended with.

In ſhort, Sir, as I am zealous for the Honour of his Majeſty, and the Freedom of the People; and as the one, if rightly conſidered, muſt be built upon the other, I could wiſh that his Majeſty's Reign were diſtinguiſh-

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ed by reſtoring to the People this fundamental Charter of their Liberty. I cannot ſee the leaſt dangerous Conſequences it can poſſibly be attended with. I can foreſee many glorious Advantages, not only to his Majeſty, but to the Nation muſt ariſe from it; as ſuch I have taken the Liberty to recommend the Conſidetation of this Meaſure; and no Man ſhall more ſincerely ſhare in the Pleaſure which the Honour of contributing to it muſt give to you, than myſelf. But if, contrary to the Hopes and Expectations of your Electors, you ſhould refuſe to concur with the Inſtances of the worthy Patriots who ſhall puſh this in your Houſe; you will ſuffer as much in your Intereſt among your Conſtituents, as you will do in the Eſteem of your Friends.

I might add a great deal more, Sir, upon this Subject, did I not think that it is ſo ſelf-evident, that it requires very little Proof. If I have omitted any Thing material, the Omiſſion will be more agreeably ſupplied by the two following Speeches of two Gentlemen who always diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their Zeal for the preſent happy Eſtabliſhment, which did not prevent their doing their utmoſt for obtaining a Repeal of this Act. Theſe Speeches were delivered at a Time when this Meaſure was propoſed; but the Reaſons for it were not near ſo ſtrong as they are at preſent; and I hope you will remember the Advice of the Poet:

Animo repetentem exempla tuorum,
Et pater Æneas & avunculus excitat Hector.

I am, Sir, your Friend and Servant, as you behave on this Occaſion.